United Nations

Press Release

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F R I D A Y H I G H L I G H T S

◆ Security Council decides unanimously to extend mandate of United Nations Peace-keeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) for another six months, until 15 December; in second decision asks Secretary-General to undertake consultations on new method of financing of Force.

◆ German Foreign Minister calls for establishment of United Nations humanitarian centres in southern Iraq to assist Shi'ite population.

◆ Secretary-General calls for international support for repatriation programme without which, he says, "fair and impartial referendum could not take place" in Western Sahara.

◆ "Day of the African Child", organized by the United Nations Children's Fund to raise awareness about the situation of children in Africa, is celebrated at United Nations.

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The Security Council this morning unanimously decided to extend the mandate of the United Nations Peace-keeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) for a further period of six months, until 15 December.

By a second unanimous decision, the Council noted with concern the "chronic financing problem" of UNFICYP to which Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar had drawn attention in his report. Members of the Council concluded that a new method of financing of the Force was needed which would put it on a sound and secure financial basis. They decided that the question of the cost of UNFICYP should be studied further with the aim of reducing and clearly defining the costs for which the Organization should be responsible.

By its decision, the Council also asked the Secretary-General to hold consultations with Council members, troop-contributing countries and others concerned, so that a decision on the question of cost could be taken by the time of the next extension of UNFICYP's mandate in December.

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The Force was established in 1964 to prevent the recurrence of fighting between the two communities -- the Greek and the Turkish Cypriots -- on the island.

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Germany is encouraging the United Nations to establish humanitarian centres in southern Iraq to assist the Shi'ite population.

In a letter to the Secretary-General, dated 13 June, German Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher said his Government was dismayed by reports of brutal acts of repression against the Shi'ites. Such flagrant violations of human rights, he said, held the danger of yet another mass exodus of Iraqi civilians in the near future. Germany had supported United Nations programmes for Iraqi refugees, he said, and was ready to provide further support if necessary.

In a separate development, Kuwait informed the Security Council that Iraq has yet to release around 3,800 prisoners of war and detainees.

In a letter of 13 June, Kuwaiti Chargé d'affaires Mohammad Al Sallal said Iraq had only returned a single aircraft out of all the property it had seized and that it continued to make hostile statements.

The Kuwaiti official described the lack of action as proof that Iraq had not implemented its acceptance of Security Council resolutions.

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The Secretary-General said yesterday in Geneva that without the repatriation programme for Western Sahara to be carried out by United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), "a fair and impartial referendum could not take place".

Opening the pledging conference for the repatriation programme, he said that was why he had recommended that the United Nations Mission for the referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) should not be deployed on schedule unless it had been unequivocally established by that date that the necessary voluntary contributions were available in full and in time for the repatriation programme. The Mission had been scheduled for deployment no later than 16 weeks after the General Assembly approved its budget on 17 May.

The Secretary-General expressed encouragement by the discussions which he had just had in Africa with the leaders of Algeria, Morocco and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Sanguia el-Hamra and Rio de Oro (POLISARIO). He said he was in a position to state unreservedly that the discussions had reinforced his optimism with respect to the positive role which the United Nations could play in solving the question of Western Sahara.

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The United Nations was celebrating today the "Day of the African Child" with activities of song, dance, poetry in the General Assembly Hall aimed at raising awareness about the situation of children in Africa.

Organized by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), today's activities take place two days prior to the official "Day of the African Child", declared last year by the Organization of African Unity (OAU). The OAU declaration committed African leaders to the survival, protection and development of the region's single most important resource -- children.

The UNICEF Executive Director, James P. Grant, told participants that the Day would serve as a reminder of the promises embodied in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, and the Declaration of the 1990 World Summit for Children.

He said that rapid population growth and scarce resources prolonged economic crisis aggravated by foreign debt, deep cuts in social spending and the scourge of the acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS), in addition to drought and armed conflict in some areas, have left Africa's children prey to disease, ignorance and poverty.

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